



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Northeast Fisheries Science Center
166 Water Street
Woods Hole, MA 02543-1026

August 3, 2005

MEMORANDUM FOR: AIS Observers

FROM: David Potter
Branch Chief, FSB

SUBJECT: New Herring Family Identification Guide Cheat Sheet

Enclosed please find the new Herring Family Identification Guide “cheat sheet.” This sheet may be used in conjunction with the Peterson and Flescher Guides for the identification of Clupeid fishes commonly encountered in the purse seine and pair trawl fisheries (as well as other fisheries).

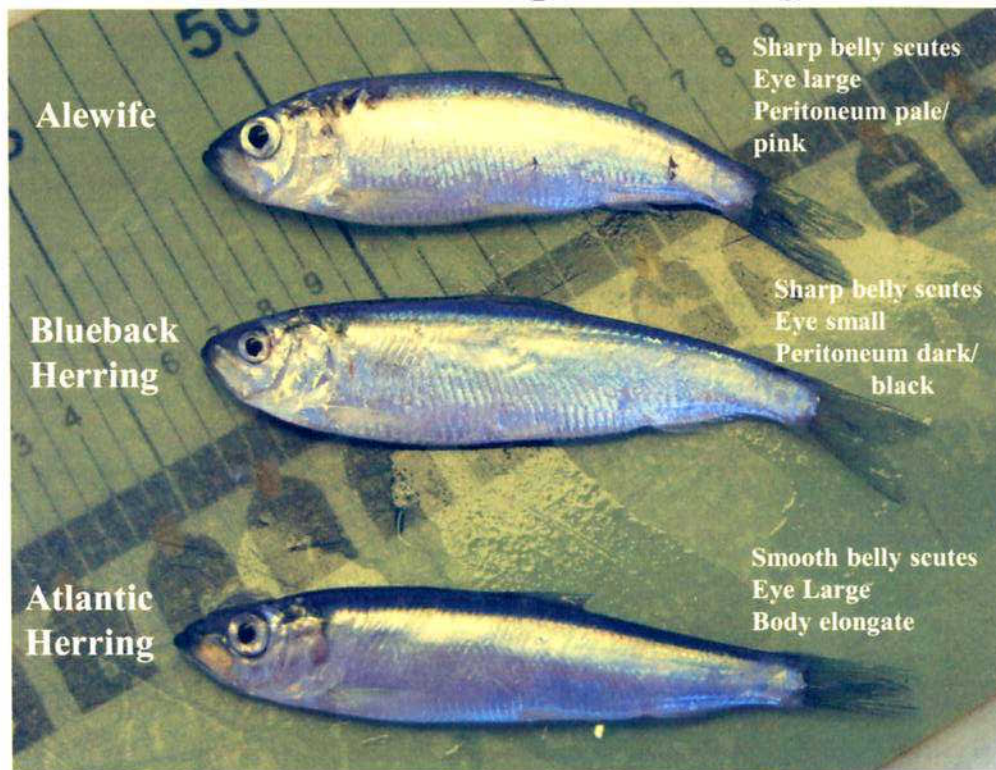
Any comments or questions regarding this material may be addressed to Jessica Melgey at (508) 495-2132 or Jessica.Melgey@noaa.gov.

Thank you.

Attachment: Herring Family Identification Guide.



Herring Family Identification Guide



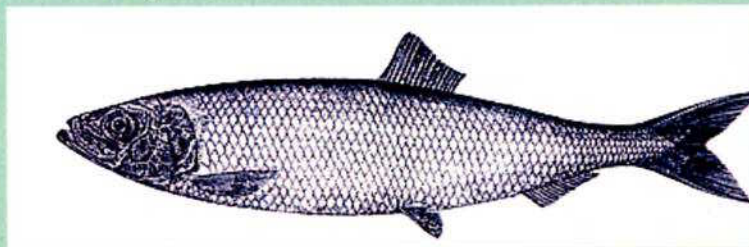
Atlantic Herring, *Clupea harengus*

Alternative names: Sea Herring, Labrador Herring, Sardine, Sperling, Brit

Range: Common in Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank and throughout Mid-Atlantic

Features:

- ◆ No visible spot, dorsal fin insertion point further back than other species
- ◆ Body elongate, eye large
- ◆ Smooth belly scutes (glove or finger should not catch when run forward from anal fin)



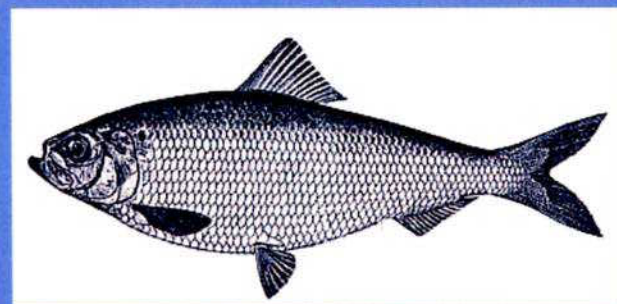
Alewife, *Alosa pseudoharengus*

Alternative names: Gaspereau, Sawbelly, Kiack, River Herring, Glut Herring, Branch Herring; Freshwater Herring; Grayback

Range: Common in Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank and throughout Mid-Atlantic

Features:

- ◆ One small black shoulder spot
- ◆ Gut cavity lining is pale pinkish
- ◆ Eye large; diameter greater than snout length
- ◆ Belly strongly sawtoothed (glove or finger will catch when run forward from anal fin)



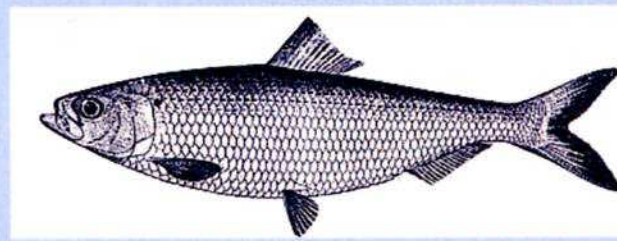
Blueback Herring, *Alosa aestivalis*

Alternative names: Glut Herring, Summer Herring, Blackbelly, Kyack

Range: Common in Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank and throughout Mid-Atlantic

Features:

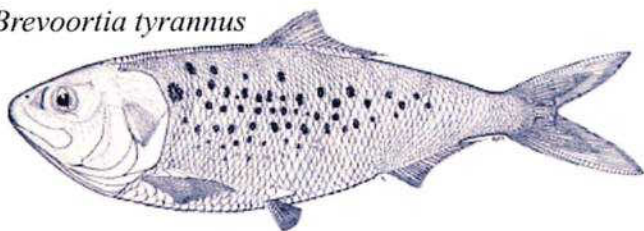
- ◆ One small black shoulder spot
- ◆ Gut cavity lining is black
- ◆ Eye small; diameter about equal to snout length
- ◆ Belly strongly sawtoothed (glove or finger will catch when run forward from anal fin)



*These three species all average 20-25 cm total length with an average weight of 0.5 lb. Maximum lengths are around 40 cm total length.

Atlantic Menhaden

Brevoortia tyrannus



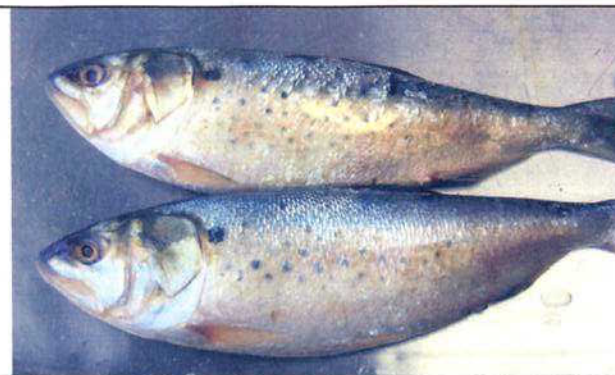
Alternative names: Pogy, Bunker, Mossbunker, Fat Back, Bugfish

Range: Common in Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank and throughout Mid-Atlantic

Ave. size: 30 cm, 0.5 lb; max size 44 cm

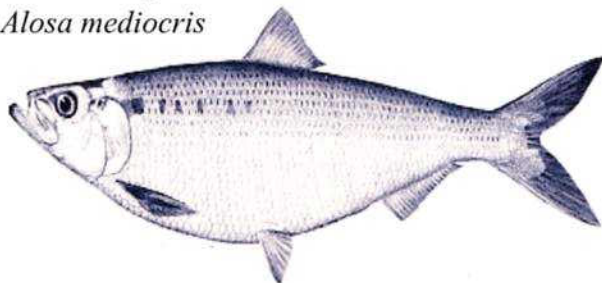
Features:

- ◆ Black shoulder spot and numerous variable spots on body
- ◆ Head large, equal to one-third standard length
- ◆ Body depth great (approximately 1/3 length)



Hickory Shad

Alosa mediocris



Alternative names: Fall Herring; Shad Herring

Range: Common in Mid-Atlantic, occasionally encountered in Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank

Ave. size: 40-45 cm, 0.5 lb; max size 60 cm

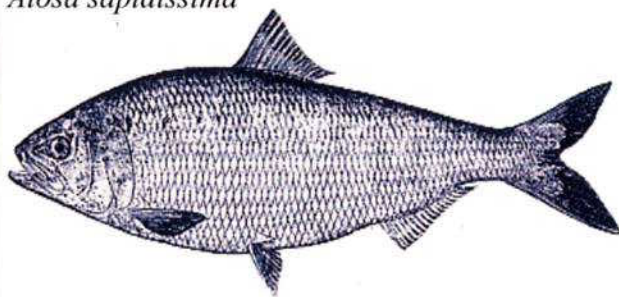
Features:

- ◆ Dark shoulder spot followed by a series of poorly defined oval-shaped spots
- ◆ Lower jaw projects strongly, mouth opens upward
- ◆ Belly strongly sawtoothed



American Shad

Alosa sapidissima



Alternative Names: White Shad

Range: Common in Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank and Mid-Atlantic

Ave. size: 50 cm, 5-10 lbs; max size 75 cm

Features:

- ◆ Dark spot behind gill cover followed by few smaller dusky round spots
- ◆ Lower jaw does not protrude beyond upper jaw when mouth is closed
- ◆ Jaw large, reaches to below the rear edge of the eye



General Identification Notes:

- ◆ Any herring over 35 cm in length will most likely be a shad.
- ◆ Color is not a reliable character with herrings as it is variable and changes quickly once the fish is out of the water. All herrings are silvery with a darker dorsal surface.
- ◆ Blueback herring and alewives are the most often confused species. They are best differentiated by cracking open the belly cavity to view peritoneum color.
- ◆ The lateral spots of the hickory shad are generally longer vertically than those of the American shad.

Other Species found off the Atlantic Coast (both commonly occur in Mid-Atlantic):

- Round Herring* - body slender, without belly scutes, head triangular
- Atlantic thread herring* - elongated ray off trailing edge of dorsal fin; 5 or 6 horizontal stripes on upper half of body